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The Gift of
John R.Effinger
and
Margaret E.Huggard

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THE TWO CONSCIENCES;

OR,

CONSCIENCE THE MORAL LAW AND CONSCIENCE THE WITNESS.

AN ESSAY TOWARDS ANALYZING AND DEFINING THESE TWO PRINCIPLES, AND EXPLAINING THE TRUE CHARACTER AND OFFICE OF EACH.

BY

WILLIAM DENNIS.

"Viewing the matter from their stand-point," (of those, that is, who do no obtain a solution from Scripture,) "it may be confidently asserted that in the whole range of mental and moral philosophy there is no question, even at our own day, so unsettled and bristling with so many disputes, as the constitution and functions of the conscience." — GARBETT, *Bampton Lecture*, 1867.

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GEORGE H. ELLIS, 141 FRANKLIN STREET.

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CHAPTER I.

PREFATORY.

THE object of this Essay is not to make a contribution to speculative philosophy, but to furnish, for practical application and use, a clearer and better defined view than has generally been presented of the nature and office of conscience. I have, therefore, in the text, avoided entering into the questions at issue between different schools of philosophy, fearing such discussions might perplex or embarrass readers not accustomed to them. Whatever

most extracts from other writers
ming a part of the argument,
found in an appendix of notes
:h reference is made at the bot-
the page. In reference to these
: it is proper to explain that the
.ct of their insertion must not
:rstood to imply unqualified ap-
of the sentiments contained in
nuch less, of the systems advo-
y their respective authors. In
:ases these extracts have been
ced as being, possibly, interest-
compare with certain portions
ext; in others, finding my own

ability, I have not hesitated to avail myself of the support thus afforded, however widely I might differ from the writer on other points or in the conclusions finally reached. These remarks are especially applicable to the extracts from the essays of Mr. Hume. That very eminent author develops and supports with admirable clearness a theory of morals that seems to me to be entirely correct and true *as far as it goes;* but its value (in my estimation at least) will be sufficiently indicated by the statement that no reference whatever to *obligation* is to be found in it.

It was remarked by Dr. Johnson that any *definition* of poetry would only show the narrowness of the definer. And in like manner it may be said,

n as an index to the constitu-
capacities and development of
ior. In such a case a candid
can only set forth what he has
d or recognized in his own
nce, and if simple moral ap-
ons, or benevolence, or utility
l as the governing principle,
plain *all* that he is conscious of,
ore can be expected from him?
no author can be reasonably
ipon to introduce into *his theory*
les and explanations that *his*
not require. Whether or not
ories based exclusively on such

as answering to *their* experience and consciousness, is a question of fact which it belongs to time and observation to determine. I think they have failed to bear this test, and that they will always be found entirely inadequate to such a purpose.

CHAPTER II.

INTRODUCTORY.

:ISION of definition and clear-
: statement are important in
epartment of knowledge, but in
:ussion of moral or ethical ques-
ıeir importance is pre-eminent.
are two reasons for this: In the
ace, these questions, so far as
e practical and not merely spec-
are in themselves of the high-

but most probably also in another which is to succeed or follow this; and, secondly, the aim or purpose of moral discourse is, in general and properly, influence—to influence action, manners, life, conduct; but without the qualities referred to, it cannot well have any complete or permanent success in this direction. Whatever else it may accomplish, whatever name, fame, or other supposed advantage it may procure for its author, its permanent practical influence cannot but be limited. We shall in vain expect that rational, intelligent assent, which is essential to profit, if the subject matter be only imperfectly and confusedly presented.

Now in no branch of ethics is the truth of the foregoing remarks more

the subject of this essay . . .
at the hands of the most emi-
ıthors. By the term conscience
eem to mean, sometimes one
and sometimes another and quite
ıt thing, and again, sometimes,
t were possible, two different
at once. Of course a degree of
istency and confusion and a con-
t want of clearness and distinct-
ı the view presented were the
.ble result.

ıop Butler, for example, asserts
will and *design*, which constitute
ry nature of actions as such, . . .
e object and the *only one* of the

and actions is conscience." But in another place he holds this language: "But there is a superior principle of reflection or conscience in every man which . . . pronounces determinately some actions to be, *in themselves*, just, right, good; others to be, *in themselves*, evil, wrong, unjust."

Now there is undoubtedly within us a principle or capacity of which the object, and the "only one," is the design, will, or purpose of the agent or actor: we are also accustomed to pronounce determinately some *actions* to be "in themselves" right and just, and others the contrary; but it is certainly not by virtue of the *same* "principle." It is plain that a principle of which the *only* object is will or design cannot possibly pronounce determinately upon

that very condition it cann
actions, so considered, for i
*

Whewell apologizes for Butle
ıg an early worker in this fiel
king that, "all truths are see
before they are seen clearly; ar
red in a vague and confuse
before they are expressed in
e and lucid form." Let us se
whether our subject has reache
finite and lucid form" in th
own account of it.

following extracts are fron
well's Elements of Morality,'

trolling and directing faculties," (Reason and the Moral Sentiments), "we form habits according to which we turn our attention upon ourselves and approve or disapprove what we there discern. *These faculties* thus cultured are the Conscience of each man."

"We approve or disapprove what we have done or tried to do. We consider our acts external and internal with reference to a moral standard of right and wrong. We recognize them as virtuous or vicious. The *faculty* or *habit* of *doing this* is Conscience."

"It may be convenient to us to mark this distinction of an internal moral standard as one part of conscience and self-knowledge or consciousness as another part. . . . We may term the former Conscience

as Law; the latter Conscience as Witness."

"We have spoken of the steps by which we establish in our minds that *i* which we call Conscience."

"It appear t has just been said, that we cannot properly refer to our conscience as an ultimate and supreme authority. . . . Conscience is not a standard personal to each man, as each man has his standard of bodily appetite. . . . Since Conscience is thus a subordinate and fallible rule. . . . Moreover, since Conscience has only this subordinate and derivative authority."

"For nothing can be more worthy of reverence than Conscience. . . . Conscience is to each man the repre-

sentative of the Supreme Law, and is invested with the authority of the Supreme Law. It is the voice which pronounces for him the distinction of right and wrong, of moral good and evil."

These detached passages, brought together from different parts of a chapter (though a very short one), appear, of course, at a disadvantage; but, making every allowance, they may, I think, be fairly considered as illustrating the importance of those qualities, clearness and precision, on which I remarked at the beginning of this chapter. To an author who confessedly made "Law" the "starting-point" of his morality, it should have been evident that "Conscience as Law" and "Conscience as Witness" could not be the same

e principle. They imply o
are incompatible in any fo
l it is equally plain that a "*fa*
abit" of considering our acts
rence to a moral standard of r
wrong, cannot at the same tim
"internal moral Standard," or
ernal Law." There is no dc
much the same sort of vacillat
confusion in the popular not
estimate of conscience that appe
r. Whewell's account of it.
ould be the purpose of a for
matic treatise to remedy this
nate state of things, not to confi

ethics), how far from clear and definite those of the *people*, upon the same subject, are likely to be. Whether or not the following passage from the seventh of this author's "Lectures on the History of Moral Philosophy," be an expression of a certain consciousness on his part in relation to this point, the reader may judge. It was, at any rate, published *subsequently* to the "Elements of Morality." "If philosophers," says he, "have analyzed man's intellectual being, and ascertained that moral good does not derive its origin from thence, we must analyze the remainder of his being and try if we can discover what the true source of moral relations is. We must do this, that is, if we can, and as soon as we can. It is easy to say, 'We must discover,' but this declara-

analyze, but it is *hard* to analy
ıt."

would be easy to add examples
:k of clearness and consisten
other distinguished writers
subject, but those already adduc
to be sufficient for the pres
ose. For they not only show tl
defect complained of exists a
ong existed, but, what is far m
ɔrtant, they may, I think, if righ
idered, indicate to us the ch
:e of it.

have already remarked on the t
ses used by Dr. Whewell, name

different parts of the same. That writer further observes that "this distinction was noted by early Christian moralists," and that they applied different (Greek) names to these two parts (or sorts) of conscience. But Bishop Butler, in the passages herein before quoted and commented on, seems to me not only to have indicated the two separate functions commonly attributed to conscience, and which he treated as belonging to a single principle or faculty, but to have stated the peculiar object or province of each with remarkable accuracy.

If I am not greatly mistaken, then, the chief cause of the vagueness, vacillation, and inconsistency that appear in the writings of most moralists in the discussion of this particular subject,

and what is far worse, that have perplexed and afflicted the minds of men both in their [illegible] l in their practice of mor[illegible] n the habit of designating [illegible] ne and of attempting to [illegible] one view, *as being one*, tw[illegible] rinciples essentially distinct in character and different in their modes of operation.

Our search for a remedy must, therefore, take the form of an attempt to distinguish and define these separate principles, if such they are, and to determine as accurately as possible the peculiar character and office of each. As Dr. Whewell observes, "we must analyze," though we may be as well convinced as he that "it is hard to analyze aright."*

* Appendix, Note B.

CHAPTER III.

CONSCIENCE THE MORAL LAW.

We may observe, in the development of our moral nature, a certain *sense of right* by which we are guided and assisted in judging of and determining the moral character of actions or conduct as being right or wrong, good or evil, just or unjust; in other words, in forming our *convictions of right*. If we analyze this principle or capacity, we shall find it to be composed of two elements; first, a tendency or predisposition, apparently in-

herent, to regard with satisfaction and approval certain qualities in actions, such as we [illegible] by the terms benevolence, [illegible]ce, and the like, and to disap[illegible] their opposites;* and secondl[illegible] ious feeling of responsibility [illegible]tability to some authority or power above us. The "approving and disapproving faculty" enables us to distinguish between the qualities of actions and to separate them into two classes, the approved and disapproved, but the feeling or sense of accountability is essentially necessary to enable us to assign to each of these classes its proper character as constituting the actions, to which they respectively belong, right, good, just;

* Appendix, Note C.

or wrong, evil, unjust. And the ground of connection is this, that we both instinctively infer and rationally judge that what our moral nature is so constituted as to approve, is also approved by that power or authority above us which our moral nature is so constituted as to recognize. Moral approbation is, of itself, manifestly inadequate to the production of the result observed; for, since by the use of language and by general consent the terms right and wrong denote respectively what is morally commanded or enjoined and what is morally forbidden or prohibited, it is impossible to regard actions or conduct as being right or wrong without reference to some authority, arbiter, or judge by whose

..ose sight, they
ght or wrong.

Hence, not without reason, have t
nclusions or convictions to whi
is sense of right has guided us be
rmed the Moral Law;* for we ha
re, first, the discriminating functio
stinguishing between the approve
d the disapproved, the lawful an
unlawful; and secondly, the sanc
n of power and authority (as recog
ed by the sense of accountability)
mmanding the one and forbiddin
other; without which sanctio
law would be but a dead letter
n other words, would be no law

correlate, a sense of the *obligation* of obedience. That which is right being that which is morally commanded, if an act be right, it must be right for some one, that is for some one to *do*. As the law of right presupposes a law-giver or arbiter by whose authority it is made a law, so also it necessarily implies a *subject* upon whom it imposes obedience. The quality of rightness, therefore, implies the obligation of obedience or *duty*, and hence the Moral Law is rightly termed the Law of Duty, and the consciousness of this obligation, the Sense of Duty.*

In the development of the powers and capacities of the individual and in the formation of character, the Sense

* Appendix, Note E.

of Right doubtless begins to exercise its influence a[illegible]rly stage of the process, and [illegible]hild recognizes by it, as if i[illegible]y, the moral or approvable q[illegible] certain actions falling under [illegible]. It is thus led to regard sucl[illegible]vith very different feelings from those excited by such as exhibit the opposite qualities. It cannot, of course, be claimed that under ordinary circumstances this preference for or approval of the right is, at this time, strong and decided; but only that there is a tendency or bias sufficient to give the suspended judgment an initial movement in the proper direction.*

That a sense or tendency of this

* Appendix, Note F.

kind is inherent in the mind, and the results observed not wholly owing to education and circumstances, seems to be evident from the following considerations: first, taking a particular case, we shall generally find this perception and appreciation of the right to be clearer and stronger than what any extraneous and adventitious influences are adequate to explain. Secondly, in a comparison of different cases it is far from being always proportionate to the proper strength of such influences in each case, and not unfrequently exhibits itself in opposition to powerful influences acting in a different direction and tending to thwart it. That which exhibits different degrees of strength must certainly be admitted to *exist*. Again, in those cases in which,

from peculiar circumstances, such as ill health and the reduced state of the physical energies and of those desires and feelings that depend on them, or from some peculiarity of physical organization, the intellectual and moral powers and capacities have been developed to an unwonted degree, this capacity has generally been developed equally with the others (sometimes indeed in a much higher degree), thus clearly showing its title to be considered one of them. Finally, except on the supposition of an inherent tendency of this kind, as has been well remarked, the general uniformity of the moral judgments of developed and cultivated humanity is entirely inexplicable.*

* Appendix, Note G.

In the early stages of mental development acts are, for the most part, regarded singly and the impression received or the judgment formed (when it amounts to that), will depend upon the effect produced by each as it presents itself to the mind of the inexperienced observer or actor, as the case may be. But as the mind becomes expanded and the experience enlarged, we gradually recognize *classes* of actions and *courses* of conduct as having a specific character; that is, as being right or wrong; and we thus deduce general rules or principles of action and conduct, to be applied to such cases as may afterwards be presented for judgment. Many similar rules are also presented to us ready made, so to speak, in the course of our education,

and if, after reflection and a comparison of them with [illegible] ense of right, we approve an[illegible] em, the result is substantially [illegible] and they need not be disting[illegible] m the others. It is in refe[illegible] hese rules or principles of [illegible] one is said to be "a man of principle," or "to act from principle;" while another is termed "a man of no principle," or an "unprincipled fellow;" phrases which, as terms of commendation and reproach respectively, are regarded as of the strongest sort: and justly too; for these *principles* are the main constituents of character. Formed as above described, they are those Convictions of Right to which reference was made at the beginning of this chapter, and are, in truth, the proper guides of life.

Now in the formation of these principles or convictions of right we are aided and guided, as before remarked, by the inherent sense of right; that spontaneous approbation of the virtuous qualities of actions which at an earlier period gave such a happy bias in favor of the right, in reference to single acts, exercises a similar influence in the selection and adoption of species or classes of acts or courses of conduct, while that important element of it, a conscious sense of accountability, must still give its sanction to our choice. Without that sanction all our rules and principles would be valueless. With no felt obligation to obedience, a moral rule, as such, is a mere nullity.

The application of these principles in practice, which is the next step, is,

for the most part an operation of the intellect. We compare a proposed act with the prin onvictions already establish r it to a class upon which ju s already been passed, and th urselves as to its proper cha nental operation becoming ar by habit as to be performed in very many cases instantaneously and even unconsciously. Hence some seem to have supposed that at this stage of progress there was no room, or, at any rate, no occasion for the use or service of the inherent sense of right. But this is to lose sight of the true character of the rules under consideration. These principles or convictions of right are not rules of expediency, or rules for the attainment of some end which itself furnishes the

inducement to follow them. They are rules of the Moral Law—of the Law of Duty; rules for obedience to superior authority; and therefore without the felt sanction of that authority (as just now remarked), they are utterly destitute of binding force. Hence the ever present necessity for the obligatory element of this legislating capacity.

But this is not all; in the manifold and complex relations and conditions of actual life, questions are continually arising that are not met by our general rules or principles, or to which at least they are but partially or imperfectly applicable. These therefore require for their solution the very same means and the same aids that were employed at an earlier period, in

the establishment and adoption of the rules themselves. Accordingly it is, I think, found [illegible] the decision of such question [illegible] the weighing and balancing [illegible] qualities and merits of actic [illegible] hich a choice has to be m [illegible] the distracting and distorting influences by which we are surrounded—even the wisest and most sincere find abundant occasion for the aiding and directing power of intuitive appreciation, and the constraining and steadying influence of a sense of accountability to a higher power to enable them to keep in the path of conscious rectitude.*

It may be observed that I speak of this sense of right as an *aiding* and

* Appendix, Note II.

directing influence. It necessarily operates in conjunction with outward or extraneous influences, such as tradition, authority, personal relations, and other circumstances; in short, with all those forces which go to make up what in the widest sense of the term we call education. But this fact should not be regarded as derogating from either its dignity or its importance. It is, in this particular, only subject to the same conditions as our other gifts and powers; they are not perfect and independent any more than this. Like this, they are, mainly, *capabilities* only: capable of being developed, improved, strengthened; capable of being applied and employed to effect their appropriate purposes; but liable also to be neglected and

disregarded, liable to be thwarted and perverted.

But not o Sense of Right subject to tl ices and conditions; it is a time, to a considerable ex ndent upon the intellectual Its action is probably mos lent in the very earliest stages of its development, that is, in determining our preference for certain qualities in actions when they first begin to take our attention; but in its subsequent practical working it generally acts in conjunction with the reason or judgment by which we determine to what actions those approvable qualities will probably belong. Finally, in weighing and balancing the effects and tendencies of different acts and courses of conduct, and in arrang-

ing and comparing conflicting claims and diverse circumstances, the principal powers and faculties of the mind may all be brought into exercise.*

It is this sense of right then as the soul, and our convictions of right as its practical embodiment, that constitute in each mind CONSCIENCE THE MORAL LAW: In other words, Conscience the Moral Law, consists of the sense of right conjoined with the convictions of right already formed: and this law is to each one the appointed rule and guide of life. It is emphatically the Law of Duty. In the words of Dr. Whewell, "it is, to each man, the representative of the Supreme Law, and is invested with the

* Appendix, Note I.

authority of the Supreme Law. It is the voice which pronounces for him the distinction between right and wrong, of moral good [illegible] As the joint product of [illegible] capacity and external influ[illegible] is liable to an admixture of [illegible] it is therefore subject to amendment or correction. But being, always and at all times, a *law to the individual* as it stands *at the time*, it admits of no compromise of obedience. In the terms of the Kantian Philosophy, its language is "categorically" or "unconditionally" "imperative." Not to act in accordance with our convictions and sense of right, is a violation of the constitution and laws of our moral nature, and can in no case admit of justification.

CHAPTER IV.

CONSCIENCE THE WITNESS.

We have seen in the preceding chapter how our *principles* of action and conduct appear to be formed: that more or less under the guidance of a conscious Sense of Right, according to the degree in which it may be possessed and to the heed given to it, and at the same time under the influence of all the various forces of education and culture, we become convinced of and are led to adopt certain rules or principles of action as being right, just,

true. These principles or rules, then, are our Conv[illegible] Right, and applied to actu[illegible] *the same conscious sense of* [illegible]er which they were formed [illegible]ed, they represent, as alrea[illegible]ed, the commands of the [illegible]v. To the individual they are the Law of Duty, and his consciousness of being subject to this law constitutes his Sense of Duty.

Now as we are compelled by a conscious sense of accountability to recognize the authority of this law, and as its commands are imperative and unconditional, *obedience* is harmony, concord, peace; and *disobedience* is rebellion, discord, and a violation of the laws of our moral nature. If therefore there was nothing in the way, nothing to turn us aside, no obstruction or hin-

drance, our "will and design" or purpose would naturally and spontaneously answer to and agree with our convictions of right or sense of duty; and our actions and conduct thus conforming to the Moral Law our course would be, in this regard, smooth, harmonious, peaceful.

But under the conditions of the present life, as we know but too well, obstructions and hindrances innumerable present themselves; hindrances of natural inclination—hindrances of apparent self-interest—hindrances of pride, passion, and prejudice—and arrested by some of these we attempt to persuade ourselves that some other course than a strict obedience to the commands of the Moral Law, something else than a strict conformity of

our will and purpose to our inner convictions may be right, or at least allowable. And i[illegible]not, yielding to temptation, r[illegible]and recklessly break out in[illegible]bellion, we are lamentably [illegible] substitute, for honest convic[illegible]an laws—common opinion [illegible]on practice, or some other equally uncertain and fallacious guide. But as—

> "He that complies against his will,
> Is of his own opinion still;"

so in our inmost heart the conviction still remains, and in accordance with the relations existing between the different parts of our moral nature, demands obedience. If then, in spite of hindrances and all opposition, we purpose and resolve to comply with this demand, we are at once conscious

of the accord or agreement between our will or purpose and our convictions, in a feeling of *satisfaction* that is in the nature of a commendation and a reward: This feeling or consciousness is an act of Conscience. If, on the contrary, swayed by unworthy influences, we are induced to purpose disobedience to the commands of the Moral Law, or, in other words, a deviation from the course indicated by our convictions, we are, in like manner, at once conscious of the discord or disagreement between such design or purpose and our convictions in a feeling of *dissatisfaction* or *compunction* that is in the nature of a condemnation and a penalty; and this feeling or consciousness is also an act of Conscience.

If, moreover, the purpose formed be accomplished by actual obedience or actual disobed corresponding feeling, as th y be, will be renewed and vith increased strength; bec the one case, a consciousnes ss, victory, exultation; and ıer of failure, defeat, humiliation—"Remorse."*

Conscience the Witness, therefore, is simply an instinctive or involuntary consciousness that we are, or are not acting, or purposing to act—or that we have, or have not acted, in accordance with our true convictions.

As this is obviously a self-consciousness that can only take cognizance of that which is *within* the mind, it cannot have any concern with actions or

* Appendix, Note J.

conduct as such; it can reach only the purpose or will from which they spring. It is upon this "will or design," therefore, that it passes judgment, and upon that alone; the ground of its judgment being simply the conformity or non-conformity of the will or purpose to our convictions.

Since, then, conscience can take cognizance of actions or conduct, only in its character of an *accomplished purpose*, the purpose, will, or design alone constituting it an object of that faculty, Conscience the Witness may be briefly defined as *an involuntary consciousness of the agreement or disagreement of our will or purpose with our Convictions and Sense of Right.**

* Appendix, Note K.

Such being the nature and office of Conscience the Witness, it may, I think, be ri[illegible]ed the true or proper Consci[illegible]s certainly that purely natural [illegible] within us that has been know[illegible]ognized as conscience by i[illegible] developed humanity the [illegible]r. It is that which St. Paul specifies, not as being the *law* which they have who "are a law unto themselves," but as "*bearing witness*," while our "thoughts accuse or else excuse one another:" That is to say, conscience accusing our purpose or intention when it does not conform to our convictions or to the Moral Law, and excusing it when it does. It is this conscience that "does make cowards of us all;" and it is also very

pointedly referred to in another place by the same author:—

> "The color of the king doth come and go
> Between his *purpose* and his *conscience*,
> Like heralds 'twixt two dreadful battles set."

Nor can there be a doubt, if the account here given of them be only tolerably correct, but that these *two kinds* of conscience, namely, Conscience the Moral Law, and Conscience the Witness (or Conscience proper) are separate and distinct principles. Not that they are unconnected; for they have a certain determinate relation to each other, as has been fully shown; but as mental principles they are separate and distinct. Nor is the difference between them obscure or difficult to recognize. They differ in that which has been held to

faculties of the mind, namely a
ence of object.* Conscienc
Moral Law regards conduct or a
as being in themselves right or v
lawful or unlawful, without refe
to the will or design of the age
actor, or to his merit or demer
guilt or innocence. But the true
science or Conscience the Witne
for its object, not conduct or acti
all, as such, but precisely the w
purpose of the actor, regardi
however only in the single aspe
its agreement or disagreement wi
convictions: The office of one is c
tive: it gives the command

monitory and judicial; it first warns and then commends or condemns: The one is objective as regarding actions and conduct; the other is subjective as relating only to the actor, his inward purpose or will, and indicating to himself his guilt or innocence.

But not only do these principles differ in their object; they differ widely also in their mode of operation. Conscience the Moral Law, formed as already described, and acting in conjunction with the intellectual faculties, is deliberate, variable, fallible; Conscience proper, on the other hand, being an instinctive feeling, is instantaneous, unerring, and infallible in its action. The test-paper when it reddens, on being dipped in a

liquid, does not more promptly or more certainly indicate its acid quality than does Conscience, the relation (whether of agreement or disagreement) between our purpose and our convictions of right.

CHAPTER V.

CONCLUSION.

In the foregoing chapters, the character and office of Conscience the Moral Law and of Conscience the Witness have been exhibited, and the difference between these two kinds of conscience pointed out—a difference that it might have been unnecessary so particularly to insist on, had they not been so generally and so unfortunately confounded. It may well be a subject of regret, that the same term should have been employed to denote princi-

ples so different in their nature and mode of operation. But this seems less to be wo[illegible] when we con-sider that co[illegible] only a name for a *species* [illegible]sness, and that both of thes[illegible]s may be re-garded as su[illegible] one is a con-sciousness of how and what we ought to do, or of duty; the other, a con-sciousness of the agreement or disa-greement of our acts and purposes with that consciousness. Much confusion and perplexity might, no doubt, have been avoided had these two principles been clearly distinguished in early analysis, and the phrase Moral Sense or Moral Law (or some other) appro-priated *exclusively*, as it has been to some extent, to the inherent Sense of

Right and its directing power and influence.*

The use of the term Conscience might then have been limited to that inward witness in the individual mind and heart, that seems clearly to have the best title to this ancient name.

But the use of the term Conscience, as denoting the Moral Law within, has become so fully established, not only in philosophical treatises but in popular language, that it seems too late to attempt any radical change in relation to it. What is practicable, and what may, with good reason, be considered indispensable, if we would be clearly understood, is the adoption of some phrase or phrases which shall

* Appendix, Note L.

...ified name, and
same time show which of the
gifts or principles we are speaki

The phrases, Conscience the
Law and Conscience the Witness
already, as we have seen, the
tion of high authority, and I
ventured to substitute for the latt
some cases, the True Conscience
Conscience Proper, as appellatio
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valid title.

I remarked, in a former chapte
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this kind, and on the loss likely

think it is, that to this cause is, in great measure, due the deplorable neglect of these Two Consciences that has prevailed in our social, educational, and religious relations. Of this neglect no *so potent* a cause at any rate can, I think, be named as the doubt and uncertainty existing in most minds respecting the nature and office of Conscience, and the consequent perplexity and vacillation in our views as to its true character and rightful authority. One conscientious man is observed to adopt one course, and another a quite different course, under the same or similar circumstances; while a third, equally conscientious, strenuously opposes both: And yet Conscience is spoken of as a divine monitor, an infallible guide. Now I

trust it may be readily seen, from what has been presented in the foregoing pages, necessary and groundless is culty or perplexity based premises as these. The and inconsistencies referre usly belong to Conscience t Law or our Convictions of Right, and they are therefore fully accounted for and explained by those variable and fallible elements, human judgment and the forces of education, which contribute so largely to the formation of those convictions.

On the other hand, our ideas of the certainty and infallibility of Conscience are evidently derived from Conscience the Witness, to which, within its own proper sphere, these

qualities unquestionably belong. Our convictions may be just and right, or more or less erroneous, but whether our will or purpose agrees or disagrees with the convictions that we have, we shall, if we will listen, be most certainly advised. As regards the authority of Conscience, it has this extent, that the Conscience of each one, his own true and honest convictions, the "Moral Law within" has, for himself, but for himself only—not for his neighbor—*supreme* authority. "Conscience," says Dr. Whewell, "is *to each man* the representative of the Supreme Law: . . . It is the voice that pronounces *for him*, the distinction of right and wrong, of moral good and evil."

The explanation just given is equally applicable to those striking changes

that sometimes occur in the lives of conscientious men. A great change having, by so been wrought in their con corresponding change of c conduct, if the Moral Law must necessarily follow. furnishes no more striking , I think, of a change of this sort than is presented in the life of St. Paul.

It appears from his own statement, that both *before* and *after* his conversion to the Christian faith, he was the same earnest, active, conscientious man. But how different were his course and conduct under the influence of *changed convictions*. At one time he was denouncing and even persecuting with energy and resolute purpose, the same "profession" that he afterwards advo-

cated and defended with like zeal and ability. Hence when he declared in presence of the Jewish council, "Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God *until this day*"—the statement seemed to the High Priest (who no doubt had some knowledge of Paul's earlier history) so outrageously inconsistent with the facts that "he commanded them that stood by to smite him on the mouth." In another place he repeats substantially the same statement, "I thank God whom I serve *from my forefathers* with a pure conscience." Again, in his defence before Agrippa, he refers expressly to his earlier convictions and to the conduct that consistently resulted from them: "I verily thought with myself" (that is, within myself, or was con-

vinced), "that I *ought* to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth: ing I also did in Jerusalem, of the saints did I shut up aving received authority fr hief priests." And having y described at some length ously he had persecuted the Christians, "being exceedingly mad against them," he then relates to the king, in explanation of the great change that had taken place in his conduct, the circumstances of his own conversion to the Christian faith: in other words, he gives an account of the means by which a great change had been produced in his convictions; a change, of which that in his life and conduct was only the natural and legitimate consequence.

But we shall not find, I think, in all the account that we have of his life, anything going to show that he was not as sincere, as earnest, and as *conscientious* too, before his conversion as he was after it. All this, it will be readily seen, is quite consistent with the nature and office of Conscience as set forth in the foregoing chapters.

Nor should the view thus presented of the true Conscience or inward witness, diminish our reverence for that principle: By limiting and defining its sphere of action, we relieve it from the charge of uncertainty and inefficiency based on its not doing what it was not intended to do; while, *within that sphere*, we attribute to it all the certainty and infallibility that its most zealous advocates could claim for it.

If this divine monitor does not advise us as to what is right and what wrong, it p[illegible] office far more important t[illegible] better adapted to our need[illegible] it is doubtless very desira[illegible] should distinctly rec[illegible] ght and be able skilfully "t[illegible] ween good and evil," it is of far greater consequence, even to the interests of society,—and in relation to our own highest personal interest, of infinitely greater moment, —that we should, with sincerity and constancy, *act* in accordance with such convictions of right as we have really and honestly formed. "It is not the want of knowledge but the perverseness of the *will*, that fills men's actions with folly and their lives with disorder," is a saying attributed to Lord

Shaftesbury; but it surely needs not the authority of a distinguished name to convince us, if we will but open our eyes, that the great difficulty of life—the source and fountain of most of the evil, the suffering and sorrow, "the wrong and outrage with which earth is filled"—lies, not in discovering the right, but in acting, amid the hindrances, the oppositions and the enticements that beset us, in conformity to that measure of right and of duty that we have been able to discover.

Hence may be plainly seen the immense importance—of the *strategic* position which Conscience the Witness occupies in the moral economy of *militant* man. Stationed, as it were, between our convictions and our acts, it keeps guard over our purposes and

intentions, and if, under unworthy influences, others are formed than such as agree or are consistent with our convictions, it at once signals to us this insubordination and disorder.

Moreover the author of our moral nature, intending, as it would seem, that this principle should act both as a check and a spur, to deter from evil and to prompt to good, has so constituted that nature, that not only is this notice attended by a sense of admonition and reproof, as from some superior authority, but, on the other hand, a determination to act in accordance with convictions, in spite of opposition and hindrances, gives rise to a sense of commendation and approval as from the same source; and thus our sense of accountability is cultivated and con-

firmed, if it be not, in this way (as I suppose it may be), first developed in the mind.* Who cannot see—nay, who does not feel that but for this heaven-sent monitor the world would be, in respect of its moral condition, but a waste howling wilderness: Or who can doubt but that if these guiding and regulating principles of our moral nature were more attentively studied, so as to be better understood, and their power and sensibility worthily cultivated, the result would be an incalculable gain.

The moral laxity of the age has been loudly complained of, and not without reason, it would seem, in view of the numerous misappropriations,

* Appendix, Note M.

defalcations, and other compromises of strict integrity that are continually reported on e nd in stations high and low s to be feared that these pa s, which accident or circu ve made conspicuous, are e regarded as only the ext s of a disease that threatens to corrupt the whole fabric of social morality. Now let us suppose it were required to name in a brief sentence a practical remedy for this alarming evil, to be applied to the rising generation, what should the answer be. Give them more learning? Teach them to read the Bible more? To go to church oftener? To say more prayers? Or would there be more directness and force in this—

TEACH THEM TO BE MORE CONSCIENTIOUS.

What gives to this remedy its peculiar efficacy is, that it tends to remove the very cause and source of the disorder—temptation. The safety of the truly conscientious man is assured, because he knows and *feels* that nothing whatever, obtained by unworthy means, can be of any value to him or give him any real satisfaction.

Yet how little effort seems to have been made to develop and cultivate these principles: We have catechisms and creeds for the instruction of the young, containing dogmas, doctrines, and "testimonies," sufficiently numerous if not always consistent or credible; but where in this connection do we find the character and authority of

Conscience the Moral Law, and the nature and office of Conscience the Witness cle[illegible]ıspicuously set forth, and [illegible]tance worthily presented ar[illegible]ın? It is plain that there [illegible]higher rule or guide "for [illegible]ı" than those principles wi[illegible]hich his Creator has implanted for that very purpose and the importance of developing, training, and strengthening these principles cannot well, therefore, be overestimated.

But the language of Bishop Butler seems to be still true, at least in reference to this particular "field:" "How much it has lain neglected is indeed astonishing."*

* Appendix, Note N.

In producing an impression that suggests the approbation or disapprobation of a superior authority as above described, Conscience assumes, in some degree, the character of a divine inspiration, and divine it undoubtedly is, but only in the same sense in which our other capacities or faculties are divine, that is, as a gift or endowment of the Divine Creator. It is true that this impression, taken in connection with the controlling influence that Conscience seems designed to exercise, may, with good reason, lead us to regard it as approaching more nearly to a direct personal communication from the Great Spirit to the spirit in us than any other normal mental phenomenon: And this has doubtless been

the cause of its having been confounded with spiritual illumination.

But a co[illegible] of the nature and office o[illegible]iple should be a remedy fo[illegible]ifusion. The true Conscie[illegible]e other mental faculties, is [illegible] and improved by the exer[illegible] proper function: By giving [illegible] to its admonitions and seeking to secure its approbation, we may increase both its susceptibility and its power, or, in other words, we may quicken its sensibility to any violence done to itself, and strengthen its influence in compelling obedience to conviction; but being perfectly simple and instinctive in its operation, it is not capable of being instructed, but acts within its appropriate sphere with that

promptness and certainty that characterize an instinct. Conscience the Witness does not see; it feels: It is not light, therefore, that it requires, but sensibility. Hence it may and doubtless often does stand in great need of a spiritual *awakening*, but not of spiritual illumination.

With Conscience the Moral Law the case is far different: the intellect which performs so important a part in the formation and practical application of our convictions, acts in a very different manner from that just described. It belongs to it to take into view the connection and dependence, the causes and consequences of actions. Hence it *labors* often under its task: And owing to imperfect knowledge, the uncertainty of the future—to nume-

rous influences that it cannot exactly measure, and complications that it cannot fully comprehend, doubt, hesitation and perplexity often attend it. Here, therefore, spiritual illumination seems to be most needed, and here, accordingly, we may most reasonably expect to find it applied when it is vouchsafed to us. It will be remembered that Solomon was emphatically commended because he asked for himself "understanding to discern judgment"—"to discern between good and bad." "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened," says St. Paul: And again, "The Lord give thee understanding in all things."

While, therefore, we are so constituted as to feel, that is, to be instinctively conscious of the uprightness of

our intentions and the sincerity of our motives, we are not to *feel* merely, but judge, by the use of those faculties with which we have been endowed, what is right and what is wrong. In the words of St. Paul, we are to "have our senses exercised, by reason of use, to discern between good and evil;" by no means, however, forgetting the important office of the inherent sense of right, or that more special aid to which reference has just been made.

APPENDIX.

NOTE (A).

"HE (Butler) betrays a sense of the greater vagueness of his notions on this subject" (Conscience). "He falters as he approaches it." "He makes no attempt to determine in what state of mind the action of Conscience consists." "He does not venture steadily to denote it by name." "He fluctuates between different appellations and multiplies the metaphors of authority and command without a simple exposition of that mental operation which these metaphors should only have illustrated."—MACKINTOSH, *Prog. of Eth. Philos.*, Art. *Butler.*

At the conclusion of the same article this author has the following: "There are few circumstances more remarkable than the small number of Butler's followers in Ethics; and it is perhaps still more observable that his opinions were not so much rejected as overlooked." And this the critic explains "as

an instance of the importance of *style.*" A much better explanation seems to be furnished by the criticisms just cited, which, it may be remarked in passing, are strikingly applicable to the critic's own treatment of the same subject as well as to that of Dr. Chalmers and some others.

NOTE (B).

I have little sympathy with the sneer at "intuitional speculation" that seems to be implied in the following, but it cannot, I think, be denied that there is some ground for the parenthetical statement which contains it: "What is therefore meant" (by certain authors referred to), "is, that there is in man an inscrutable feeling, in presence of any proposed act, which, in an inexplicable way, so operates on the intellect as to coerce it into the affirmation of the rightness, approvableness, and obligatoriness of that act. (For Conscience, as commonly treated, does all three, and the three mental acts are hopelessly mixed together in intuitional speculation.)"—S. S. LAURIE, *Philos. of Ethics.*

NOTE (C).

"The mind of man is so formed by nature that upon the appearance of certain characters, dispositions, and actions, it immediately feels the sentiment

of approbation or blame; nor are there any emotions more essential to its frame and constitution.—HUME'S *Essays.*

NOTE (D).

"In the fifth place, we are conscious that there is a Moral Law, a Law of Duty, which unconditionally commands the fulfilment of its behests."—HAMILTON, *Metaphysics*, Lect. 46.

"Two things there are, which the oftener and the more steadfastly we consider fill the mind with an ever new, an ever rising admiration and reverence; the Starry Heavens above, the Moral Law within."—KANT.

NOTE (E).

Dr. Whewell takes exception to the axiom of Warburton, that "Obligation necessarily implies an Obliger;" arguing in opposition to the maxim that the "idea of obligation is involved in the idea of right." This agrees with the statement in the text, and is indeed quite true, but it is in no way inconsistent with the maxim; for right itself, if it means anything more than expediency, utility, benevolence, or some similar principle, necessarily implies an arbiter, and the arbiter is the obliger, right and obligation being correlates or mutually implying each other. To a moralist who *defines* right as what

the voice of mankind pronounces to be right, it is no wonder that some difficulty occurred on this point.

NOTE (F).

"The same conclusion is strongly confirmed by the early period of life at which our moral judgments make their appearance, long before children are able to form the general notion of happiness, and indeed in the very infancy of reason."—STEWART, *Philos. of Moral Powers.*

"Let these generous sentiments be supposed ever so weak; let them be insufficient to move even a hand or a finger of our body; they must still direct the determination of our mind, and where everything is equal produce a cool preference of what is useful or beneficial to mankind above what is pernicious and dangerous. A *moral distinction* therefore immediately arises; a general sentiment of *blame* and *approbation;* a *tendency*, however faint, *to the objects* of the one and a proportionable *aversion* to those of the other."—HUME'S *Essays.*

See also Note (I).

NOTE (G).

"This principle indeed of precept and education, must be so far owned to have a powerful influence that it may frequently increase or diminish beyond

their natural standard the sentiments of approbation and dislike; * * * but that *all* moral affection or dislike arises from this origin will never surely be allowed by any judicious inquirer."

"Twist and turn this matter as much as you will, you can never rest the morality on relation, but must have recourse to the decisions of sentiment."—HUME'S *Essays.*

It will be seen how unequivocal the testimony of this author is, to the *existence* of an inherent or spontaneous sentiment of approbation or blame, however different his statement of the *basis* of it may be from those of Butler, Stewart, and others of the same or a kindred school. See also Note (C).

NOTE (H).

"At what time the notions of *good*, *bad*, and *indifferent* first clearly presented themselves to the mind, it is as impossible to say, as to determine when we first distinctly recognized as such, and severed from each other, the visible phenomena of *white*, *black*, and *gray*. All that we can hope to do is, by subsequent analysis of the compound phenomenon, to detect in its composition an intuitive and a reflective element growing side by side from the first dawn of intelligence, and contributing their respective shares to the gradual development of their mutual product."—MANSEL, *Metaphysics.*

It were hard to say which is the more admirable, the perfect clearness, or the perfect accuracy of the foregoing statement.

"I am apt to suspect that reason and sentiment concur almost in all moral determinations and conclusions."—HUME'S *Essays.*

This might be a useful hint to some modern critics who pride themselves on applying the *scalpel* to the *living subjects* of religion and morals with as much coldness and indifference as a physiologist would unfold the wrappings of a mummy: as if the mind of man *consisted* of pure intellect instead of being *composed* of both feelings and faculties all equally entitled to exercise their legitimate influence.

"We find that every civilized man inevitably has his mind stored with a collection of moral generalizations, in the form of precepts and rules which constitute its furniture, and unquestionably feels with almost instantaneous rapidity the quality of the great majority of acts. The discerning intellect presents acts [an act?] for judgment as one of a *class* already adjudged in respect of rightness or wrongness in some other way. But with a conscience so equipped and provided, &c."—S. S. LAURIE, *Philos. of Ethics.*

Those who have maintained the existence of an inherent moral sense, are often represented,—see Note (B).—as holding the opinion that this faculty enables us to determine the character of an act at

sight and without any reference to its qualities. That off-hand decisions of this sort are continually made is unquestionable, but that they are made directly by virtue of a moral sense is not so clear. A better explanation of the process seems to be furnished in the above extract, and the judgment *seems* to be intuitive because the mental operation involved is so often repeated that, as already remarked in the text, it comes to be performed instantaneously and unconsciously. All that is assumed here is a certain inherent tendency or bias which inclines us to approve, not certain actions, but certain *qualities* in actions. But, unless it be in the case of a specific command, I do not see how a moral character of any sort can be attributed to an act apart from its qualities, nor, *excepting so far as the natural bias above mentioned may extend*, how the qualities of an act are to be recognized and determined otherwise than by a reference to its effects and tendencies as apprehended by the intellect. Since, however, no precise limit can be set to the cultivation and development of the sense of right, any more than in the case of any other capacity, there is no occasion for surprise, as if some strange and *supernatural* thing had happened, should it sometimes seem to forestall the reason or judgment in leading us to a conclusion in a doubtful and perplexing case.

NOTE (I).

"But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."—ST. PAUL, *Heb.* v. 14.

Et consuetudo exercitatioque capienda, ut boni ratiocinatores officiorum esse possimus, et, addendo deducendoque, videre, quæ reliqui summa fiat: ex quo, quantum cuique debeatur, intelligas.—CICERO, *De Officiis, I.* 18.

Trans.—And habit and practice are to be applied in order that we may become good accountants of duties, and, by adding and subtracting, see what amount of remainder may result; from which thou mayst understand how much is due to each.

NOTE (J).

"Man, as conscious of his liberty to act, and of the law by which his actions ought to be regulated, recognizes his personal accountability and calls himself before the internal tribunal which we denominate Conscience. Here he is either acquitted or condemned. The acquittal is connected with a peculiar feeling of pleasurable exultation, as the condemnation with a peculiar feeling of painful humiliation—Remorse."—HAMILTON, *Metaphysics.*

See also Note (M).

NOTE (K).

"The sentiment of respect for the Law of Duty is the Moral Feeling, which has by some been improperly denominated the Moral Sense; for through this feeling we do not take cognizance whether anything be morally good or evil, but when by our intelligence we recognize aught to be of such a character, there is herewith associated a feeling of pain or pleasure which is nothing more than our state (?) in reference to the fulfilment or violation of the law."

This is certainly something like the truth; whether it be *clear* or not the reader may judge. The author evidently has in view, in this passage, Conscience the Witness, but he objects to the phrase, Moral Sense, as not being appropriate to it, whereas it is, *of course*, only applicable to the sense of right which forms the basis of Conscience the Moral Law; thus illustrating again the confusion to which the want of distinction between these *two species* of conscience has so uniformly led.

NOTE (L).

I have preferred the phrase, Sense of Right, to Moral Sense, not because I see much force in the objections that have been made to the latter, but because the former seems more definite and exact and to be at the same time more agreeable to analogy and

the idiom of the language. As we have a sense of duty, a sense of justice, a sense of the ridiculous and the like, so we have I think a sense of right; that is, in these and similar cases, a capacity of perceiving, or of receiving an impression from, that which we are said to have a sense of.

NOTE (M).

"We cannot obey a moral law without experiencing from that obedience, pleasure; and we cannot disobey a moral law without, as a consequence, suffering pain. Let me add that as this pleasure and pain are accompanied by a judgment of the reason (?) which says to the agent not only 'Thou hast done well,' or 'ill,' but also, 'Thou art worthy,' or 'unworthy,' they are the most vivid which human sensibility is capable of feeling."—JOUFFROY, *Ethics*.

NOTE (N).

The rule or principle of obedience to Conscience, as being "to each man the representative of the Supreme Law," has not I think been *fairly* tried by any sect or society; but an *imperfect* trial may, with proper *allowance*, be taken as indicating what might be expected under more favorable conditions. The Society of Friends or Quakers not only failed to

distinguish between Conscience the Moral Law and Conscience the Witness, but added to these, spiritual illumination, giving, to the whole combined, the mystical name of the Inward Light. More than this, forgetting, as it would seem, that "Light" is only a *means* by which *we see more or less clearly*, they attributed to the spiritual element a *directive* function, and thus made it exhibit the plainest inconsistency in not directing all alike.

Their "Inward Light" was, no doubt, like that of other men, the Two Consciences enlightened and quickened according to the need and desert of each; yet in spite of the imperfect and erroneous theory, in spite of their very *formal* opposition to *forms* and their singular devotion to "peculiarities," both which tended to detract very much from the attention due to the "weightier matters of the law," such virtue was there in an open and distinct recognition of an *inward* guide, and in making it the corner-stone of their system that they established and maintained a reputation for honesty, uprightness and the moral virtues generally that has long been proverbial. They have moreover illustrated, to some extent at least, the effect of cultivating and developing the inherent sense of right by their *anticipation*, within their own organization, of several important moral reforms that have since come to be generally recognized as necessary.

THE END.

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